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rectifying of popular errors, sifting that which is essentially evil from that which is only conventionally evil, and setting forth the proper bases of actions in clearer lights and stronger colors. For instance, it is said in criticism of the women of a certain city that they venture out after nightfall without male escorts. Adjacent cities stand on tiptoe to look at these shameless creatures. The air is filled with dust and stones hurled at them by scandalized civilization. But the women persist. Their marketing, shopping, calling, and visiting places of amusement in the evening go placidly on. By-and-by a scientist investigates the facts and finds that these women are as safe on the streets as they are in the most sacred, exclusive, down-lined nests of homes; that the city is quiet and well-lighted, and that assaults upon women who mind their own business are practically unknown. Next a philosopher arises who teaches the people that the Turkish women's custom of wearing veils in the presence of men is no more a superstition than the custom of women remaining indoors after twilight in localities where there is nothing to fear outside. He teaches that acts should be approved or condemned for rational reasons, and not because they conform or do not conform to standards that had their origin among different environments, and grew out of conditions which no longer exist. A few listen, popular prejudices weaken, rationality grows, and gradually large numbers of women learn to adjust their movements to a real, not a fanciful, environment. Thus social revelations may be conducive to benefits neither suspected nor intended by the revealers. They may lead to discoveries that tendencies popularly supposed to be towards disease are really towards health.

Children, slaves, the sane among maniacs and the philosopher among savages must resort to concealments, falsehoods and evasions as means of protection against the brutalities of power; but a people with nothing tangible to fear can have only petty and childish excuses for covering its customs from the eyes of the world.

Ignorance is perilous; knowledge is helpful, necessary. Dangers to be avoided must be known. Every individual finds the knowledge tending to self-preservation more useful than any other. Questions of justice to be decided must be discussed. Folly to be denounced, wisdom to be commended, error to be recognized, tendencies to be studied, re-adjustments to be made, sociological inductions to be drawn, require that the related facts be laid bare unreservedly and collected and arranged with scrupulous care.

CLARA DIXON DAVIDSON.

ENGLISH POOR LAW REFORM.

THE demand for an inquiry into the working of the English Poor Law, which Mr. Gladstone's Government has met by the appointment of a Royal Commission, has come from two different quarters—from politicians who are unconnected with Poor Law administration, and from those who may be regarded as experts in it.

For half a century or more the Poor Law has had no place in national politics, and its local administration has been much freer from party politics than has the administration of municipal government. The Poor Law was placed on an entirely new basis after the investigation of the Royal Commission of 1834, and has not been materially interfered with by Parliament since that time.

Although it is less than eighteen months since the demand for an inquiry into the working of the Poor Law assumed national importance, there has been for some years in London an association for the Reform of the Poor Laws. Its members were for the most part Radicals. They were not numerically strong; little was heard of the work, but at the annual election of Poor Law Guardians in London, it has been their practice to put forward candidates pledged to their programme.

It was, however, only when Mr. Chamberlain launched his Old Age Pension scheme, at the beginning of 1892, that the demand for an inquiry into the working of the Poor Law became general. Mr. Chamberlain's contention that the Poor Law had failed in its dealing with deserving old people, who were no longer able to maintain themselves, was supported by Mr. John Morley, who dealt with the question in speeches at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and at Sale, near Manchester, within a few weeks after the publication of Mr. Chamberlain's article in the *National Review*.

At Newcastle, when addressing a meeting composed almost exclusively of the members of friendly societies, Mr. Morley asked: "Has the time come when there should be an examination as to whether the provisions and practice of the year 1834 should be modified in regard to old age?" and "Are we to make the operation of the law more elastic in that particular field?" The answers given by his audience to Mr. Morley's questions were in the affirmative; and between the date of the Newcastle speech and the General Election, local Radical Associations in different parts of the country adopted Reform of the Poor Laws as one of the planks in their electioneering programme, and pressed Parliamentary candidates who sought their suffrages to pledge themselves to the movement for an inquiry by Royal Commission.

After the General Election, when it was seen that the appointment of a Royal Commission would be secured, members of Poor Law Guardians Boards also began to advocate an inquiry, and to indicate some of the questions to which they would like to direct the attention of the Commission. As the appointment of the Commission will be due principally to the demands of the Radical Poor Law Reformers, it will be as well to state the questions they desire to bring before the Commissioners, and then to outline those which will be submitted by the Poor Law experts.

In the first place the Radicals ask for more elasticity in the administration of the Poor Law—so far as it touches old and deserving poor—those who are in the workhouse through no fault of their own, and who before they sought its shelter had a life-long record of honesty, industry, and good citizenship. The Poor Law, as at present administered, draws no distinction between people of this kind and those whose whole lives have been vicious and criminal. Inside the workhouse all the people are herded together on exactly the same level, no attempt whatever being made to distinguish between them. This, the Radical Poor Law reformers urge, is one of the greatest blots on the system. They are also dissatisfied with the attitude taken up by many of the Boards of Poor Law Guardians in regard to the administration of outdoor relief. Outdoor relief is one of the few matters concerning which each board is allowed to determine its own policy.

The policy of the Local Government Board, the government department which controls all local administration in England and Wales, is to curtail outdoor relief as much as possible, but it is left to each Board of Guardians to decide whether it will refuse outdoor relief at its discretion in each indi-

vidual case which comes before it. Most Poor Law experts are with the Local Government Board in its desire that outdoor relief should be cut down to the lowest possible point, and in consequence many of the Boards of Guardians altogether refuse outdoor relief, and offer no alternative from the workhouse to all applicants. This is particularly the case in the London unions, in which the granting of outdoor relief has been brought down to as low a proportion as 20.2 of the total sum administered by the Metropolitan Poor Law Guardians. Last year this total was £912,276, of which £723,158 was represented by indoor relief—that is, relief in the workhouses, and £184,118 was paid out as doles to people who were living with or were partially supported by relatives and friends.

Poor Law reformers insist that this cutting down of outdoor relief has been pushed too far, and that in many instances a grant of two shillings and sixpence weekly from the Guardians, supplemented as it would be by the help of relatives, would save the rate-payers seven shillings and sixpence, and would also save many deserving old men and women who are past work from leaving their home and going into the workhouse.

There is also a feeling among some of the advocates of Poor Law reform that the law as it now stands is a little too harsh in its treatment of tramps and vagrants. They hold that the task which a tramp is compelled to perform before he leaves the casual ward after being afforded a night's lodging, detains him at work too far on into the day, and hinders his chance of getting permanent employment.

These are some of the objections which the Radicals urge against the Poor Law, as it is now administered under control of the Local Government Board, by the Boards of Guardians, in the 648 unions into which England and Wales are divided. They are also asking for reforms in the mode of electing Guardians. They complain that property is altogether too well represented on the Boards as now constituted, and would like to see an end to the system under which county magistrates are *ex-officio* members of the Boards for the unions in which they live, and also an end to the system of plural voting.

At present a ratepayer is allowed to vote in accordance with the amount of his assessment to the Poor Rates. The Radicals also object to the property qualification for a Poor Law Guardian. This is a matter largely in the hands of the Local Government Board, which fixes the qualification in each union. There is no uniformity in this matter. The Law sets out that the Board cannot require a qualification exceeding the annual value of £40. The Local Government Board settles the qualification in each union after consideration of the local circumstances and conditions, and thus it comes that the qualifications vary from £10 in one union to the maximum sum in another.

The Radicals desire a low uniform qualification, on the ground that as working men may become members of the House of Commons, and of city and county councils, there is no reason why they should not also become members of Poor Law Guardian Boards. The people who become chargeable on the Poor Rates are mostly of the laboring classes, and it is maintained by the Radicals that representatives of the working classes ought to have places on the Boards which deal with their cases.

When the County Government Bill of 1888 was in committee of the House of Commons there was a movement on the part of the Radicals to place the Poor Law administration in the hands of the new county councils

created by that measure. No success then attended the endeavor to make this transfer of power, but the attempt is likely to be renewed, now that the whole question of the administration of the Poor Law is to be inquired into by Royal Commission and later on dealt with by Parliament.

Poor Law experts have about half a dozen questions which they would like to have ventilated at the coming inquiry. Many experts are in favor of a total abandonment of the system under which outdoor relief is administered. Others would like to see some system devised which would enable a classification to be made of paupers in the workhouse. They admit the justice of the complaint of Poor Law reformers in regard to deserving old people who come upon the Poor Rates, but insist that at present there is no way out of the difficulty.

The vexed question of settlement will also be brought before the Commission. This question has been greatly narrowed and shorn of many of its difficulties since the Poor Law of 1834 first came into operation; but it still gives trouble occasionally, and in the case of contending unions calls for the intervention of the Local Government Board, and sometimes for that of the law courts. With a view to settling the question once and for all, some of the Poor Law specialists will advocate the abrogation of the law of settlement and the substitution of one under which all paupers shall become chargeable to the union in which they seek relief.

As the law now stands, twelve months' residence gives a man a settlement and prevents his being returned to the union in which he was born, as was the rule in the early days of the Poor Law. Under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1851, the Local Government Board may determine questions of settlement arising between the Guardians of two Poor Law unions, and an order to this end made under the seal of the Local Government Board is in all courts and for all purposes final and conclusive. That cases of disputed settlement still occur is shown by the fact that in the year ending the 1st of July last, seven of these orders were issued by the Board, which in reporting the fact in its annual Blue Book expressed regret that Boards of Guardians do not more generally resort to this inexpensive mode of obtaining a decision in settlement cases, and thereby save the cost which litigation to the same end involves.

One other important question which Poor Law experts will submit to the Royal Commission is that affecting tramps. They are anxious that there should be uniformity of treatment of tramps and vagrants all over the country. They are not, as are the Radical Poor Law reformers, of the opinion that the tramp suffers any great hardship under the existing law. They hold that two-thirds of the tramps in England are worthless people, who would rather tramp the country than settle down permanently to work, and that in most unions the treatment accorded them is altogether too indulgent. Slackness in this matter in one union tells to the disadvantage of its neighboring unions, and for this reason Poor Law experts demand a more uniform treatment of tramps. They insist that these people belong to no particular union, but to the State, and that they can best be dealt with by an authority representing a much larger area than a Poor Law union. In London, with its thirty unions, the cost of feeding and sheltering tramps is borne by the whole metropolis, and defrayed out of a common fund.

Poor Law Guardians in the provinces who have given attention to the question are calling for a somewhat similar system outside London and

are urging that each county should have the care and defray the cost of relieving the tramps within its borders. Alien immigration has, within the last twelve months, greatly exercised Poor Law Guardians in the North of England, and it is quite possible, that, notwithstanding the attention which Lord Dunraven's Committee of the House of Lords gave to this question two or three years ago, the Poor Law phase of it may be again fully discussed before the Royal Commission.

EDWARD PORRITT.